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Latinx Psychologist: Navigating the Intersectionality of Ethnicity and Career

Jeanette Santos, M.A., Martha Guerra, M.S., & Jessica M. Martin, Psy.D.



The views expressed are those of the authors/presenters and do not reflect the official views of the Department of Defense or its Components. The voluntary, fully informed consent of the subjects used in this research was obtained as required by 32 CFR 219 and DODI 3216.02_AFI40-402.

Introduction

The profession of psychology is a challenging and demanding field, particularly for newly registered psychologists entering the workforce (Kolar, Von Treuer, & Koh 2017). For female early career psychologists (ECPs), they may face unique challenges, such as willingness to compromise partner and children for career, during the course of their occupational development. Women early career psychologists are tasked with integrating their personal and professional identities and overcoming gender-related barriers to professional growth and career success. As such, the importance of cultural and ethical issues in early career psychologists cannot be underestimated, regardless of the professional setting. Even though women earn the majority of psychology doctoral degrees, approximately 71 percent, as of 2006, women are continually underrepresented in academia and face a distinctive set of issues (Burrelli, 2008). These difficulties are remarkably increased for ethnic minority women, such as Latinas. In this research project we explored the available literature on challenges early career psychologists face in their career development.

Challenges and Barriers of Latinx ECPs

1. Latina women experience more microaggressions at work and at school than Latino men.
2. Latinas and Latinos of Dominican descent experienced being exoticized and treated as a sexual object than other Latinos
3. Puerto Ricans experienced being treated as second-class citizens or as criminals, more than other Latino ethnic group
4. Young Latinx and those with lower levels of education, experienced being invalidated more than older Latinx and those with more education
5. Latinx born outside of the U.S. are more likely to be treated as inferior compared to Latinx born here.

Comments and Narratives experienced by Latinx ECPs

- ❑ “Wow, *you* speak English so well... did they teach you English in Mexico. You speak so well!”
- ❑ “*You* are really smart. Are *you* the first person in your family to graduate from school?”
- ❑ “*You* are very acculturated.”

Non-Latinx co-worker: Can *you* act as translator for this Honduran family?

Latinx ECP: But, I’m not from Honduras, I’m Mexican.

Non-Latinx co-worker: What’s the difference? It’s all the same Spanish?

“In my own experience, my educational path has often resulted in a certain degree of isolation, particularly from my white peers. Although we were in the same classes, moving toward the same goal of graduation, I frequently found my voice in silence.”

Literature

- There is scarce research that focuses on understanding career development for women early career psychologists (O’Shaughnessy & Burnes, 2016).
- Women in psychology have increasingly become majority; approximately 75 % (Clay, 2017; Cynkar, 2007), yet they continue to be underrepresented in the higher levels of career hierarchies (O’Shaughnessy & Burnes, 2016). For example, full faculty, high-ranking administrator, and leadership positions continue to be held primarily by men (O’Shaughnessy & Burnes, 2016; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Halpern, 2008; Hollenshead, 2003).
- Scholars have pointed to the presence of a glass ceiling effect in women career advancement; this has been attributed to difficulties navigating motherhood and family obligations, among others (Crosby, Williams, & Biernat, 2004; Hiraakata & Daniluk, 2009; Samble, 2008; Williams, 2005).
- O’Shaughnessy & Burnes, (2016), found three main domains of perceived influencing factors for women early career psychologists: Identity-based (Gender Socialization and Feminist Identity, and Cultural Identity), experiential-focused (accessing mentorship, navigating systemic challenges, sexism), and outcome-oriented (family and caretaking, self-care, career, milestones).

References

Microaggressions were assessed with The Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS; Nadal, 2011). Nadal, K. L. (2011). The Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS): Construction, reliability, and validity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 58(4), 470-480. doi: [10.1037/a0025193](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0025193)

O’Shaughnessy & Burnes, 2016 The career adjustment experiences of women early career psychologists. *The counseling psychologist*, 44 (6), 786-814